[RU] Ministry of Culture refuses and withdraws film distribution certificates

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Since Federal Law No. 324-FZ came into force on 1 March 2026, the Russian Ministry of Culture, the federal authority that licenses theatrical distribution, has intensified the refusal process for distribution certificates, required for any national and foreign releases to be shown commercially or in public in the Russian Federation. It has also withdrawn certificates already issued. The precedent of *Nuremberg* by James Vanderbilt, denied its 19 March release by the Ministry of Culture, was followed by *Leaving North Korea*, directed by Frederik Sølberg and reported as a Danish–South Korean co-production: the 30 April release did not proceed.

Both refusals rested on the same provision: sub-point "z" of point 19 of the Procedure for issuing distribution certificates (Ministry of Culture Order No. 942 of 21 May 2024), which allows refusal "in other cases determined by federal laws". That residual clause incorporates the grounds set out in Article 5.1, part 4, of Federal Law No. 126-FZ of 22 August 1996 on state support for cinematography

– material breaching anti-terrorism or anti-extremism law, pornography or violence, and, since the entry into force of Federal Law No. 324-FZ, content that discredits "traditional values" (see IRIS 2026-3). Although this "traditional values" ground had just been added to the same article, the ministry did not invoke any of the listed grounds. It merely cited the residual clause, and did not identify which federal law the films were held to contravene. The clause had been used before the reform – in October 2025 the Ministry had refused a certificate to Jafar Panahi's *It Was Just an Accident*, winner of the 2025 Cannes Palme d'Or.

These measures form part of a wider tightening of access for foreign cinema in the country. A bill introduced in the State Duma on 12 March 2026 added an express ground to the same Article 5.1 for refusing foreign films found to demean "the dignity of the Russian person", and later the same month the president pressed the government to prepare quotas for foreign films in cinemas.

The ministry has also begun withdrawing certificates already granted, a power introduced by the same 2025 reform. Reading the register, the news outlet Verstka (considered "undesirable" by the authorities) found at least seven titles, including films by Xavier Dolan and Céline Sciamma, withdrawn after 1 March

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2026 by orders that were not published and with no ground recorded.

The same machinery has reached filmmakers tied to European audiovisual production. On 27 March 2026 the Ministry of Justice entered Pavel Talankin – co-director, with the Denmark-based filmmaker David Borenstein, of *Mr Nobody Against Putin*, winner of the 2026 Academy Award and BAFTA for best documentary – in its register of "foreign agents", maintained under Federal Law No. 255-FZ of 14 July 2022. A Denmark-Czech co-production carried by public-service broadcasters in several member states, the film is built from footage Talankin filmed in his own school in the Urals, documenting the patriotic-military mobilisation of Russian schooling after February 2022; a court in Chelyabinsk had banned its distribution in Russia the day before. The register cited his dissemination of "inaccurate information" about the authorities' decisions and his opposition to the "special military operation" in Ukraine. On 24 April 2026 it also added the directors Yuri Mamin, who emigrated to the United States in 2019, and Yuri Teplyakov, granted political asylum in France in 2022, on similar grounds.

Whether the act is the refusal of a foreign release, the withdrawal of a certificate, or the designation of a filmmaker, the published record identifies no specific federal law applied.

Министерство культуры России аннулировало лицензии на прокат семи фильмов в течение трёх месяцев после вступления в силу закона «О кинематографии и традиционных ценностях» 29 марта 2026 года

https://verstka.media/minkultury-otozvalo-prokatnye-udostovereniya-u-semi-filmov

Russia’s Ministry of Culture revokes distribution licenses for seven films within three months of the “Traditional Values” Cinema Law taking effect, 29 March 2026

Russian Ministry of Culture Denies Distribution Licence to Documentary Leaving North Korea, 23 April 2026

https://www.interfax.ru/culture/1085593

Russian Ministry of Culture Denies Distribution Licence to Documentary Leaving North Korea, 23 April 2026

Реестр иностранных агентов Министерства юстиции (Таланкин, 27 марта 2026 г.; Мамин, Тепляков, 24 апреля 2026 г.)

https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/activity/nko/foreign_agents/

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Minjust foreign-agent register (Talankin 27 Mar 2026; Mamin, Teplyakov 24 Apr 2026)

Федеральный закон № 324-ФЗ от 31 июля 2025 года, Официальный интернет-портал правовой информации (публикация № 0001202507310070)

http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202207140008

Federal Law No. 324-FZ of 31 July 2025, Official Internet Portal of Legal Information (publication No. 0001202507310070)

Президент России, заседание Совета по культуре, Kremlin.ru, 25 марта 2026 года

https://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/79414

President of Russia, Meeting of the Council for Culture, Kremlin.ru, 25 March 2026

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